

The Hon. Chris Christie
Governor of New Jersey
(Remarks as Prepared for Delivery)
August 28, 2012

This stage and this moment are very improbable for me.

A New Jersey Republican delivering the keynote address to our national convention, from a state with 700,000 more Democrats than Republicans.

A New Jersey Republican stands before you tonight.

Proud of my party, proud of my state and proud of my country.

I am the son of an Irish father and a Sicilian mother.

My Dad, who I am blessed to have with me here tonight, is gregarious, outgoing and loveable.

My Mom, who I lost 8 years ago, was the enforcer. She made sure we all knew who set the rules. In the automobile of life, Dad was just a passenger. Mom was the driver.

They both lived hard lives. Dad grew up in poverty. After returning from Army service, he worked at the Breyers Ice Cream plant in the 1950s. With that job and the G.I. bill he put himself through Rutgers University at night to become the first in his family to earn a college degree. Our first family picture was on his graduation day, with Mom beaming next to him, six months pregnant with me.

Mom also came from nothing. She was raised by a single mother who took three buses to get to work every day. And mom spent the time she was supposed to be a kid actually raising children – her two younger siblings. She was tough as nails and didn't suffer fools at all. The truth was she couldn't afford to. She spoke the truth – bluntly, directly and without much varnish.

I am her son.

I was her son as I listened to “Darkness on the Edge of Town” with my high school friends on the Jersey Shore.

I was her son as I moved into a studio apartment with Mary Pat to start a marriage that is now 26 years old.

I was her son as I coached our sons Andrew and Patrick on the fields of Mendham, and as I watched with pride as our daughters Sarah and Bridget marched with their soccer teams in the Labor Day parade.

And I am still her son today, as Governor, following the rules she taught me: to speak from the heart and to fight for your principles. She never thought you get extra credit for just speaking the truth. The greatest lesson Mom ever taught me, though, was this one: she told me there would be times in your life when you have to choose between being loved and being respected. She said to always pick being respected, that love without respect was always fleeting -- but that respect could grow into real, lasting love.

Now, of course, she was talking about women.

But I have learned over time that it applies just as much to leadership. In fact, I think that advice applies to America today more than ever.

I believe we have become paralyzed by our desire to be loved.

Our founding fathers had the wisdom to know that social acceptance and popularity is fleeting and that this country's principles needed to be rooted in strengths greater than the passions and emotions of the times.

Our leaders today have decided it is more important to be popular, to do what is easy and say "yes," rather than to say no when "no" is what's required.

In recent years, we as a country have too often chosen the same path.

It's been easy for our leaders to say not us, and not now, in taking on the tough issues. And we've stood silently by and let them get away with it.

But tonight, I say enough.

I say, together, let's make a much different choice. Tonight, we are speaking up for ourselves and stepping up.

We are beginning to do what is right and what is necessary to make our country great again.

We are demanding that our leaders stop tearing each other down, and work together to take action on the big things facing America.

Tonight, we choose respect over love.

We are not afraid. We are taking our country back.

We are the great grandchildren of men and women who broke their backs in the name of American ingenuity; the grandchildren of the Greatest Generation; the sons and daughters of immigrants; the brothers and sisters of everyday heroes; the neighbors of entrepreneurs and firefighters, teachers and farmers, veterans and factory workers and everyone in-between who shows up not just on the big days or the good days, but on the bad days and on the hard days.

Each and every day. All 365 of them.

We are the United States of America.

Now we must lead the way our citizens live. To lead as my mother insisted I live, not by avoiding truths, especially the hard ones, but by facing up to them and being the better for it.

We cannot afford to do anything less.

I know because this was the challenge in New Jersey.

When I came into office, I could continue on the same path that led to wealth, jobs and people leaving the state or I could do the job the people elected me to do – to do the big things.

There were those who said it couldn't be done. The problems were too big, too politically charged, too broken to fix. But we were on a path we could no longer afford to follow.

They said it was impossible to cut taxes in a state where taxes were raised 115 times in eight years. That it was impossible to balance a budget at the same time, with an \$11 billion deficit. Three years later, we have three balanced budgets with lower taxes.

We did it.

They said it was impossible to touch the third rail of politics. To take on the public sector unions and to reform a pension and health benefit system that was headed to bankruptcy.

With bipartisan leadership we saved taxpayers \$132 billion over 30 years and saved retirees their pension.

We did it.

They said it was impossible to speak the truth to the teachers union. They were just too powerful. Real teacher tenure reform that demands accountability and ends the guarantee of a job for life regardless of performance would never happen.

For the first time in 100 years with bipartisan support, we did it.

The disciples of yesterday's politics underestimated the will of the people. They assumed our people were selfish; that when told of the difficult problems, tough choices and complicated solutions, they would simply turn their backs, that they would decide it was every man for himself.

Instead, the people of New Jersey stepped up and shared in the sacrifice.

They rewarded politicians who led instead of politicians who pandered.

We shouldn't be surprised.

We've never been a country to shy away from the truth. History shows that we stand up when it counts and it's this quality that has defined our character and our significance in the world.

I know this simple truth and I'm not afraid to say it: our ideas are right for America and their ideas have failed America.

Let's be clear with the American people tonight. Here's what we believe as Republicans and what they believe as Democrats.

We believe in telling hard working families the truth about our country's fiscal realities. Telling them what they already know – the math of federal spending doesn't add up.

With \$5 trillion in debt added over the last four years, we have no other option but to make the hard choices, cut federal spending and fundamentally reduce the size of government.

They believe that the American people don't want to hear the truth about the extent of our fiscal difficulties and need to be coddled by big government.

They believe the American people are content to live the lie with them.

We believe in telling seniors the truth about our overburdened entitlements.

We know seniors not only want these programs to survive, but they just as badly want them secured for their grandchildren.

Seniors are not selfish.

They believe seniors will always put themselves ahead of their grandchildren. So they prey on their vulnerabilities and scare them with misinformation for the cynical purpose of winning the next election.

Their plan: whistle a happy tune while driving us off the fiscal cliff, as long as they are behind the wheel of power.

We believe that the majority of teachers in America know our system must be reformed to put students first so that America can compete.

Teachers don't teach to become rich or famous. They teach because they love children.

We believe that we should honor and reward the good ones while doing what's best for our nation's future – demanding accountability, higher standards and the best teacher in every classroom.

They believe the educational establishment will always put themselves ahead of children. That self-interest trumps common sense.

They believe in pitting unions against teachers, educators against parents, and lobbyists against children.

They believe in teacher's unions.

We believe in teachers.

We believe that if we tell the people the truth they will act bigger than the pettiness of Washington, D.C. We believe it's possible to forge bipartisan compromise and stand up for conservative principles. It's the power of our ideas, not of our rhetoric, that attracts people to our Party.

We win when we make it about what needs to be done; we lose when we play along with their game of scaring and dividing.

For make no mistake, the problems are too big to let the American people lose – the slowest economic recovery in decades, a spiraling out of control deficit, an education system that's failing to compete in the world.

It doesn't matter how we got here. There is enough blame to go around.

What matters now is what we do.

I know we can fix our problems.

When there are people in the room who care more about doing the job they were elected to do than worrying about winning re-election, it's possible to work together, achieve principled compromise and get results.

The people have no patience for any other way.

It's simple.

We need politicians to care more about doing something and less about being something.

Believe me, if we can do this in a blue state with a conservative Republican Governor, Washington is out of excuses.

Leadership delivers.

Leadership counts.

Leadership matters.

We have this leader for America.

We have a nominee who will tell us the truth and who will lead with conviction. And now he has a running mate who will do the same.

We have Governor Mitt Romney and Congressman Paul Ryan, and we must make them our next President and Vice President.

Mitt Romney will tell us the hard truths we need to hear to put us back on the path to growth and create good paying private sector jobs again in America.

Mitt Romney will tell us the hard truths we need to hear to end the torrent of debt that is compromising our future and burying our economy.

Mitt Romney will tell us the hard truths we need to hear to end the debacle of putting the world's greatest health care system in the hands of federal bureaucrats and putting those bureaucrats between an American citizen and her doctor.

We ended an era of absentee leadership without purpose or principle in New Jersey.

It's time to end this era of absentee leadership in the Oval Office and send real leaders to the White House.

America needs Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan and we need them right now.

There is doubt and fear for our future in every corner of our country.

These feelings are real.

This moment is real.

It's a moment like this where some skeptics wonder if American greatness is over.

How those who have come before us had the spirit and tenacity to lead America to a new era of greatness in the face of challenge.

Not to look around and say "not me," but to say, "YES, ME."

I have an answer tonight for the skeptics and the naysayers, the dividers and the defenders of the status quo.

I have faith in us.

I know we can be the men and women our country calls on us to be.

I believe in America and her history.

There's only one thing missing now. Leadership. It takes leadership that you don't get from reading a poll.

You see, Mr. President – real leaders don't follow polls. Real leaders change polls.

That's what we need to do now.

Change polls through the power of our principles.

Change polls through the strength of our convictions.

Tonight, our duty is to tell the American people the truth.

Our problems are big and the solutions will not be painless. We all must share in the sacrifice. Any leader that tells us differently is simply not telling the truth.

I think tonight of the Greatest Generation.

We look back and marvel at their courage – overcoming the Great Depression, fighting Nazi tyranny, standing up for freedom around the world.

Now it's our time to answer history's call.

For make no mistake, every generation will be judged and so will we.

What will our children and grandchildren say of us? Will they say we buried our heads in the sand, we assuaged ourselves with the creature comforts we've acquired, that our problems were too big and we were too small, that someone else should make a difference because we can't?

Or will they say we stood up and made the tough choices needed to preserve our way of life?

I don't know about you, but I don't want my children and grandchildren to have to read in a history book what it was like to live in an American Century.

I don't want their only inheritance to be an enormous government that has overtaxed, overspent and over-borrowed a great people into second-class citizenship.

I want them to live in a second American Century.

A second American Century of strong economic growth where those who are willing to work hard will have good paying jobs to support their families and reach their dreams.

A second American Century where real American exceptionalism is not a political punch line, but is evident to everyone in the world just by watching the way our government conducts its business and everyday Americans live their lives.

A second American Century where our military is strong, our values are sure, our work ethic is unmatched and our Constitution remains a model for anyone in the world struggling for liberty.

Let us choose a path that will be remembered for generations to come. Standing strong for freedom will make the next century as great an American century as the last one.

This is the American way.

We have never been victims of destiny.

We have always been masters of our own.

I won't be part of the generation that fails that test and neither will you.

It's now time to stand up. There's no time left to waste.

If you're willing to stand up with me for America's future, I will stand up with you.

If you're willing to fight with me for Mitt Romney, I will fight with you.

If you're willing to hear the truth about the hard road ahead, and the rewards for America that truth will bear, I'm here to begin with you this new era of truth-telling.

Tonight, we choose the path that has always defined our nation's history.

Tonight, we finally and firmly answer the call that so many generations have had the courage to answer before us.

Tonight, we stand up for Mitt Romney as the next President of the United States.

And, together, we stand up once again for American greatness.